

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 /066 W
-----098283 151624Z /45

R 151437Z AUG 78

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9486

INFO DIA WASHDC

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, TH

SUBJ: KRIANGSAK CLEARS PATH FOR LARGER POLITICAL ROLE

REF: A. BANGKOK 23039 (NOTAL), B. BANGKOK 22490 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: INITIAL REACTION TO CABINET RESHUFFLE OF AUG 11 (REF A) HAS BEEN CAUTIOUS, BUT MOST OBSERVERS SEE IT AS STRENGTHENING POSITION OF PRIME MINISTER KRIANGSAK WITH VIEW TO ELECTIONS. FOR HIS PART, KRIANGSAK HAS AVOIDED COMMITTING HIMSELF ON PARTICIPATING IN ELECTIONS HIMSELF, BUT IN BROADEST HINT TO DATE HE TOLD PRESS AUG 14 THAT, IF HE RUNS, HIS CONSTITUENCY WILL BE IN SAMUT SAKHON PROVINCE, ADJOINING BANGKOK. ALTHOUGH KRIANGSAK HAS TAKEN A SIGNIFICANTLY MORE EXPLICIT POLITICAL POSITION THAN PREVIOUSLY, ISSUES OF MILITARY TRANSFERS AND RETIREMENTS AT END OF SEPTEMBER AND APPROVAL OF NEW CONSTITUTION ARE MATTERS WHICH WILL NEED TO BE DISPOSED OF BEFORE

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KRIANGSAK MAKES HIS PLANS CLEAR. END SUMMARY.

1. INITIAL REACTION TO LIMITED THAI CABINET RESHUFFLE ANNOUNCED AUG 11 (REF A) HAS BEEN CAUTIOUS, REFLECTING THIS EARLY STAGE IN OPENING UP OF THAI POLITICAL SYSTEM, WHEN POLITICAL ACTIVITY REMAINS FORMALLY BANNED. NO RPT NO MAJOR POLITICAL FIGURES HAVE YET COMMENTED PUBLICLY ON

RESHUFFLE. BANGKOK NATION AUG 14 CARRIES CARTOON SUGGESTING THAT APPOINTMENT OF TWO RETIRING MILITARY OFFICERS TO CABINET (DEPUTY COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF ROYAL THAI ARMY, GEN. YOT, AND COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF ROYAL THAI NAVY, ADM. AMON) STRENGTHENS POSITION OF PRIME MINISTER KRIANGSAK. BANGKOK POST EDITORIAL AUG 14 CONCLUDES THAT RESHUFFLE INVOLVES HOLDING THE FORT UNTIL THE GENERAL ELECTIONS, NOTING THAT CABINET "HAS ONLY A FEW MORE MONTHS TO REMAIN IN OFFICE BEFORE GENERAL ELECTIONS." GENERAL YOT TOLD PRESS AUG 13 HE WAS PLEASED TO LEARN OF HIS NEW APPOINTMENT. GEN. LEK, IN PRESS INTERVIEW AUG 13, EXPRESSED SOME MISGIVINGS ABOUT HIS APPOINTMENT AS MINISTER OF INTERIOR, AS HE WAS NOT RPT NOT FAMILIAR WITH WORK OF MINISTRY. HOWEVER, HE SAID HE WOULD CARRY OUT HIS DUTIES LOYALLY. HE STATED THAT ELECTIONS WILL DEFINITELY BE HELD IN APRIL, 1979, AND THAT THEY WOULD BE CONDUCTED "IN A FAIR AND CLEAN MANNER."

2. IN INTERVIEW WITH NATION AUG 13 KRIANGSAK SAID HE HAD DECIDED TO GIVE UP MINISTER OF INTERIOR PORTFOLIO AS HE THOUGHT HE SHOULD NOT REMAIN AS INTERIOR MINISTER WHEN HE DECIDED TO "JUMP INTO THE POLITICAL ARENA." KRIANGSAK INDICATED THAT HE MADE THE RESHUFFLE DECISION WITHOUT CONSULTING EITHER THE CABINET OR THE NATIONAL POLICY COUNCIL (MILITARY GROUP RESPONSIBLE FOR THE COUPS OF OCT, 1976, AND OCT, 1977), OUT OF CONCERN THAT THE

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NEWS MIGHT LEAK PREMATURELY. ARMY COMMANDER IN CHIEF, GEN. SOEM, TOLD PRESS HE ALSO HAD NOT RPT NOT KNOWN IN ADVANCE OF RESHUFFLE BUT APPROVES IT. KRIANGSAK DID NOT RPT NOT INDICATE IN INTERVIEW WITH NATION WHETHER HE WOULD PARTICIPATE HIMSELF IN THE GENERAL ELECTIONS, MAINTAINING THE AMBIGUOUS STANCE HE HAS HAD UP TO NOW ON THIS ISSUE. HOWEVER, IN A VERY BROAD HINT, HE TOLD PRESS AUG 14 THAT, IF HE DECIDES TO RUN IN THE ELECTIONS, HIS CONSTITUENCY WOULD BE IN HIS BIRTHPLACE, SAMUT SAKHON PROVINCE, ADJOINING THE BANGKOK MUNICIPAL AREA.

3. MANNER IN WHICH KRIANGSAK HANDLED RESHUFFLE UNDERLINES HIS EFFORT TO SATISFY GENERAL YOT, ALSO ISOLATING RETIRED ADM. SA-NGAT, CHAIRMAN OF THE NATIONAL POLICY COUNCIL, WITH WHOM HIS RELATIONS HAVE DETERIORATED. AS WE NOTED IN REF B, BY ASSUMING POST OF MINISTER OF DEFENSE KRIANGSAK RETAINS A MAJOR ROLE NOT ONLY IN THE FORTHCOMING LIST OF MILITARY TRANSFERS BUT ON A CONTINUING BASIS IN CONNECTION WITH OTHER ISSUES THAT MAY COME UP. THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE USUALLY DOES NOT RPT NOT INTERFERE IN MILITARY SERVICE MATTERS DIRECTLY, BUT HE IS THE CONDUIT FOR THE TRANSMISSION OF SERVICE VIEWS TO THE GOVERNMENT.

AS KRIANGSAK LOSES A DIRECT MILITARY ROLE WITH HIS RETIREMENT FROM THE ROYAL THAI ARMY SEPT 30, HE RETAINS A MAJOR MILITARY ROLE AS MINISTER OF DEFENSE.

4. ALTHOUGH KRIANGSAK HAS TAKEN A SIGNIFICANTLY MORE EXPLICIT POLITICAL POSITION THAN HE HAD PREVIOUSLY EXPRESSED PUBLICLY, THERE ARE TWO MAJOR ISSUES WHICH MUST STILL BE CLEARED AWAY. MILITARY TRANSFERS AND RETIREMENTS DUE TO TAKE EFFECT AS OF OCT 1 (REF B) WILL PROBABLY NOT BECOME KNOWN UNTIL ABOUT MID-SEPTEMBER. OTHER PRINCIPAL ISSUE IS RESOLUTION OF NEW CONSTITUTION, WHICH IS NOW BEFORE CONSTITUTION SCRUTINIZING COMMITTEE

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ACTION EA-12

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-----098431 151625Z /45

R 151437Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9487
INFO DIA WASHDC
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BANGKOK 23481

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

(CSC) OF NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

5. IN CONNECTION WITH CONSTITUTION, CSC CHAIRMAN LTG CHALOEMCHAI CHARUWAT TOLD PRESS AUG 10 THAT COMMITTEE THAT DAY HAD APPROVED CHANGE IN DRAFT TO MAKE ASSEMBLY INTO UNICAMERAL LEGISLATIVE BODY, HALF-ELECTED AND HALF-APPOINTED, WITH MEMBERS SERVING TERM OF FOUR YEARS. EMBASSY HAS LEARNED THAT VOTE ON UNICAMERAL LEGISLATURE PROPOSAL WAS 17 FOR, FOUR AGAINST, WITH SIX ABSTENTIONS AND EIGHT ABSENCES IN 35-MEMBER COMMITTEE. MEASURE THUS HAD LESS THAN MAJORITY OF 35 MEMBERS OF CSC. MOREOVER, ONE OF PRINCIPAL "YOUNG TURK" ARMY OFFICERS ON

CSC, LTC PRACHAK, HAD ADVOCATED WHOLLY-ELECTED, BICAMERAL LEGISLATURE. ISSUE WILL GO BEFORE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY WHEN CSC REPORT IS MADE AND SECOND READING DEBATE TAKES PLACE. THERE IS NO RPT NO INDICATION WHEN THIS WILL BE, BUT CONSTITUTION IS NOT RPT NOT EXPECTED TO BE APPROVED UNTIL OCTOBER. NOT SURPRISINGLY, PROPOSAL

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FOR HALF-ELECTED, HALF-APPOINTED UNICAMERAL LEGISLATURE IS NOT RPT NOT UNIVERSALLY POPULAR, PARTICULARLY AMONG PRESS AND POLITICAL FIGURES, WHO VIEW PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE WITH SUCH LEGISLATURES, UNDER CONSTITUTIONS OF 1932 AND 1952, AS LESS THAN SATISFACTORY.

6. ALTHOUGH THERE IS STILL A CONSIDERABLE DISTANCE TO BE TRAVELED, KRIANGSAK NOW APPEARS TO BE SLOWLY BUT STEADILY LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR HIS EXPECTED CONTINUATION IN OFFICE UNDER WHATEVER CONSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE MAY EMERGE.
ABRAMOWITZ

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Message Attributes

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